

Influenza (Flu) Information

What is the Flu (influenza)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year. Some people, such as older people, young children and people with certain health problems (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease) are at high risk for serious flu complications. Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu
- More than 226,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications
- About 36,000 people die from flu

What are the symptoms of the Flu?

- Fever
- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Dry cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults

How is the Flu Spread?

Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person when someone with flu coughs or sneezes. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick.

What are the Complications of Flu?

Complications of flu can include bacteria pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes.

What else can I do to protect against the flu?

Take everyday steps to prevent the spread of flu germs.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If that is not available, use alcohol-based hand rub.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then wash your hands.
- Keep your hands away from your face.
- Stay home if you get sick. Children should not go to school until their temperature has been normal for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medication.

What are the Two Types of Flu Vaccine?

There are two types of flu vaccine, the flu "shot" or the "nasal spray". The flu "shot" is given with a needle in the arm. It is made with killed virus. The flu shot can be given to people 6 months of age or older, including healthy people, those with chronic medical conditions, and pregnant women. The "nasal spray" flu vaccine is made with weakened flu viruses. It can be given to healthy people 2 through 49 years of age; it can not be given to pregnant women.

For more information about these vaccines go to the CDC website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-flulive.pdf>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-flu.pdf>